

# ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

## Without a price tag but not without value

For the very fact that they are essential for human life, ecosystem services also have an economic value. In most cases, however, beneficiaries do not fully recognise it.

It is easy to comprehend the economic value of commonly used **services**. Take for example the food we bring to our tables or the **wood** we use to build and furnish our homes or produce many everyday objects.

What is much more difficult is discerning the economic value of services of a different nature that are not captured by that immediate value indicator we call “price”. For example, what is the value of the forest’s capacity to **infiltrate water and return it to the valley purified**? Or to absorb and store CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere?

How can we estimate the **historic and cultural value** of the Cansiglio Forest, which has been a model of sustainable forest management since the time of the Venetian Republic? And its value as an ideal place for **scientific training, educational and research activities**?

We take these values for granted until we lose them and have to invest resources and money to restore them, like, for example, when we have to repair the harm done by natural disasters taking place where ecosystems have been degraded or no longer exist.

There is therefore a need to prevent the loss of ecosystem values by creating equal forms of support to the economic effort that owners and managers of ecosystems have to face to maintain their good functionality.

This support does not have to necessarily come from public financing; it can become tangible in the form of direct offsets between the beneficiaries and producers of ecosystem services. This would give a better way to direct economic resources towards the services that deliver the greatest benefits at the local level.



(Photo: E. Piutti)